



The Outrigger **Journey**



A vertical arrangement of shells and stones on a green leaf against a wooden background. The composition is centered and symmetrical. At the top is a small, white, spotted shell. Below it are two dark, smooth, rounded stones. This is followed by another white, spotted shell. Below that are two more white, spotted shells. At the bottom is a final dark, smooth, rounded stone. The entire arrangement is set on a single, large, green leaf that is folded to form a narrow channel. The background is a warm, textured wooden surface with horizontal grain lines.

THE SONG OF MANA

REMEMBERING THE SOUNDS OF OLD HAWAI'I

BY KRISTEN NEMOTO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINNY MORRIS

Before the popularization of the “jumping flea” known as the ‘ukulele or Bing Crosby’s holiday classic “Mele Kalikimaka,” there was a single beat—a distinct rhythmic sound that transcended from one Hawaiian lineage to another. Unlike a written score by Mozart or a tale within a history book, ancient Native Hawaiians expressed themselves in the form of storytelling, otherwise known as the tradition of *mō’olelo*, an oral account of a person, place, thing or event that’s communicated from generation to generation. Unabashedly personal and emotionally charged, *mō’olelo* is steeped within thousands of years worth of *mele* (song), *oli* (chant) and *hula* (dance).

Native Hawaiians thrived in the art of *mele*, conveying songs and stories from former leaders who stressed the importance of the past as a guide for defining what was *pono* (proper, true). Without these teachings, many Native Hawaiians would not have the proper knowledge of their own traditions, which today remains pivotal to the survival and perpetuation of Hawaiian beliefs and culture.

To enhance the expression of Native Hawaiian poetry, single or combined implements and *hula* would accompany the lyrics of a song. Except for the *‘ili’ili* (stone pebbles) used as percussion and the *pū* (conch-shell trumpet), most ancient implements were made, at least in part, from plant materials and required days, months and even years of laborious work.

One of Merrie Monarch Festival’s (known as the Olympics of *hula*) most revered teachers, *Kumu Hula* (hula teacher) Kaleo Trinidad appreciates Native Hawaiian ancestors’ ability to be completely “utilitarian” and precise in their craft. It’s an art form that he strives to re-create in his *hula* practice.

“Native Hawaiian implements are shaped exactly the way they’re needed,” Trinidad says. “If you notice, there are not many ornamentations on it. Why? Because to keep that instrument strong, you don’t carve into it.”

The implements need to be thoughtful and sound, according to Trinidad. During the 2014 Merrie Monarch, his *hālau* (hula school) *Ka Leo O Laka I Ka Hikina O Ka Lā* (the voice of Laka at the rising of the sun) demonstrated such virility and strength while using Hawaiian implements in the *hula kahiko* (ancient form of *hula*) division that they took home the cov-



(Previous spread from left) The details of an *‘uli’uli* (feathered gourd rattle); and *‘ili’ili* (stone pebbles) and *pūpū* shells. This spread (clockwise from top left): a hula dancer holds two *kāla’au* (beating sticks); the ends of two *kā’ēke’ēke* (bamboo pipes); an assortment of *kāla’au*; *‘ūlili* (chord) rattles; hula dancers using *pū’ili* (split bamboo) rattles; and a hula dancer holding *‘ili’ili* in between her fingers to create a distinct percussion sound.





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along the brim) that has a lot of parts to it ... Who would think to make something like that? It’s just so interesting.”

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: (PAGE 48, TOP LEFT) ©JOE CARINI/GETTY IMAGES; (PAGE 48, BOTTOM LEFT) ©JOE CARINI/PACIFICSTOCK; (PAGE 48, MIDDLE LEFT) ©PHILIP ROSENBERG/PACIFICSTOCK; (PAGE 50, BOTTOM RIGHT) ©RON DAHLQUIST/GETTY IMAGES; (PAGE 51, LEFT) ©ALLAN SEIDEN/GETTY IMAGES

eted overall winner title. As rows of his mountainous men stood with *kāla'au* (beating sticks) in each hand, they knelt and stomped to the beat of "Aia I Ni'ihau Ku'u Pāwehe"— a dedicatory dance to the island of Ni'ihau. With a vertical and longer *kāla'au* in their left hands and a horizontal and shorter *kāla'au* in their right, the men of Ka Leo banged the sticks to create percussions of stomp, stomp, stomp ... tap, tap; stomp, stomp, stomp ... tap, tap. Using ancient implements, the young dancers performed to the beat of the sacred mele, just the way their ancestors had done so before them.

"What we don't realize enough today is that Hawaiians were so meticulous," Trinidad continues. "(There's the) *'uli'uli* (gourd rattle, with usually dyed red and yellow duck feathers along the brim) that has a lot of parts to it ... Who would think to make something like that? It's just so interesting."

Another rattle instrument includes the *pū'ili* – a fringed or split bamboo that's often played by dancers seated cross-legged. The predecessor to the 'ukulele, the *'ūkēkē*, was the only stringed instrument in Hawai'i, made of fine two-ply dried fibers and sandalwood. In the percussion family are the *ipu pa'i*, a large double-gourd; the *pūniu* known as the coconut knee drum; and the *hula pahu*, a bass drum that's traditionally made from the base of a coconut trunk and sealed with a piece of stretched and fitted shark belly skin.

Today, ancient Hawaiian implements can still be seen in local museums or at hālau performances throughout the Islands, on the mainland and abroad. In the hands of talented artists such as the late Gabby "Pops" Pahinui or Jake Shimabukuro, modern implements such as the slack key guitar and the 'ukulele have revolutionized Hawaiian music. In the spring of 2015, Governor of Hawai'i David Ige declared the 'ukulele and the pahu as official state musical implements.

When it comes to using any implements in his hālau performances, Trinidad appreciates them all equally, as each represents a special piece of his ancestors' lineage. It's a ritual he hopes to pass down to each of his students and anyone interested in Hawai'i's unique connection to its past.

"You have to keep the culture alive," he says. "How a particular object conveys its mana or spiritual essence is what's happening to the implements. It's a beautiful and amazing reflection upon Hawaiian people and Hawaiian culture."





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(Clockwise from top left) Two variations of an ipu (gourd drum); the detailed carvings of a pahu drum; a hula dancer beats the top of a pahu, traditionally made out of shark skin; a hula dancer prepares to beat an ipu drum; a pū (conch-shell trumpet) that’s usually used prior to a hula performance or ceremony as a way to mark an official beginning.